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# Public memorial coming together for “Phantom of the Fox”

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Updated April 13, 2016 | Filed in [celebrities](#), [Fulton County](#), [Local News](#), [Neighborhoods](#).

The family of **Joe Patten**, known lovingly as Atlanta’s “Phantom of the Fox,” is in town sorting through his affairs and planning a small, private service. But plans for a public memorial are starting to take shape, too.

“He’s Atlanta’s boy and Atlanta should be able to say goodbye,” said his nephew **Greg Patterson**. Patten died this week at 89.



*Joe Patten in the living room of his apartment in the Fox Theatre in 2007. AJC file photo/Ben Gray*

The family is in touch with the Fox to see about a time when a public event might be possible. "That would be a fitting tribute," Patterson said. A Fox spokeswoman said things were still coming together.

Patten had called an apartment in the Fox facility home for more than 30 years. Originally from Florida, he served in the U.S. Navy and worked for years as a Westinghouse X-ray technician.

"It was toward the end of his career at Westinghouse" that he started fiddling with organ parts, Patterson said. Patten moved to Atlanta after his mother visited and spoke highly of it.





His fascination with gadgets started in the pews.

“At a very young age, maybe 12 years old or so, sitting in church he loved watching the organist play,” Patterson said. Even watching television, young Joe would be more intrigued with how the picture tube worked than what was being played on the screen, he said.

“He couldn’t play a tune to save his life but was fascinated by all the machines,” he said.

Although he dedicated his life to machinery, he didn’t want to be sustained by it. The family took him off life support in accordance with his wishes, Patterson said.

“He was pretty explicit: he didn’t want to be kept alive by a bunch of machines,” he said. “I was there yesterday when we took him off life support. It was a very emotional moment watching him slip away.”

Patterson’s mom is Patten’s sister, and the Phantom served as a mentor to his nephew. Patten lived in College Park before taking up residence at the Fox.

“He never ended up having children of his own. I guess he was too busy with his own life,” Patterson said.

“He was looking for someone with a mechanical mind. I remember one time he handed me a bucket of parts. He said, ‘Make something.’ I made this big tower, like an erector set. He said, ‘Alright. You’ll do.’ The next thing I knew I was working on cars with him.”

Today Patterson works as a budget officer at Florida Department of Transportation. “I still deal with cars, just in a different capacity,” he mused.

He is in charge of sorting through his uncle’s affairs and transporting his many personal items out of the Fox. It’s unclear what will become of his former home.

Although sifting through his uncle’s things is a sorrowful duty, “It’s kind of a pleasure to look back on fun times,” Patterson said. “Almost every object in his apartment has a story to it.”



*Joe Patten and the Fox's "Mighty Mo." AJC file photo/Jessica McGowan*